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Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the Consortium for Global Education, I am deeply honored to speak to you today. I extend my gratitude to Dr. Carolyn Bishop, President of CGE, and Dr. Ben Burnett, President of William Carey University, for affording me this opportunity. Above all, I offer praise, honor, and glory to the God Almighty who was, who is, and who is to come.

I'd like to commence with three pressing questions that have been posed to me, and I invite you to share your wisdom in addressing them:

Question 1: How can we navigate the significant decline in the college-age population?

Question 2: Is a college education worth the investment?

Question 3: Given the rise of generative AI like Chat GPT, is there a future for the current college education model?

Declining Enrollment

In numerous advanced economies, the college-age population is dwindling, with some facing drastic declines. For example, in South Korea, this year alone, 310,000 students are expected to apply for admission to colleges and universities, while they wish to admit up to 400,000. Many universities will find themselves unable to enroll their desired number of students. Especially hard hit are the universities that are located outside of the Seoul Metropolitan Area. This trend is expected to continue until at least 2040. Even if there should be a sudden, substantial increase in baby births, this picture will not change for the next two decades. By the year 2038, 15 years

from now, more than half of the universities and colleges will have closed down. This demographic shift could potentially lead to widespread turmoil in affected communities.

Do you need a college degree?

Recent trends also highlight concerns among high school graduates and parents regarding the cost–effectiveness of higher education. Some argue that the value of a traditional four–year college education may not justify its tuition and expenses, with suggestions that two–year programs may offer comparable or even superior benefits.

(Employers relaxed degree requirement/ UDACITY) Furthermore, prominent companies like Google, Delta Airlines, and IBM have relaxed their degree requirements for certain positions, emphasizing the growing demand for practical skills over traditional academic backgrounds. Competitive advantages of four-year liberal arts education are fast disappearing as the digital economy demands employees with pragmatic skills and knowledge.

Higher Education Challenges

This leads us to a critical issue: the evolving landscape of higher education. A Korean professor humorously remarked that in many colleges and universities, a 20th–century professor is teaching 21st–century students in a 19th–century classroom. While an exaggeration, it serves as a warning.

Our educational paradigms are lagging behind the exponential growth of information and communication technology (ICT). Is college education okay the way it is? In a world driven by the 4th Industrial Revolution, the most sought–after skills include complex problem–solving, critical thinking, and creativity. While colleges and universities contribute to fostering these abilities, alternative online platforms such as Udacity, EdX, Coursera, and Google Certificate Program often do so more efficiently.

AI

The more pressing concern, however, is the advancement of artificial intelligence, especially generative AI like Chat GPT, which can sometimes surpass human abilities. As Gina Gopinath of the IMF asserts, this disruptive force requires higher education to innovate exponentially, not incrementally. We must undertake a quantum leap, harnessing our empathy and ingenuity, the qualities that make human intelligence unique.

Another Question / Survey

Within the realm of Christian Higher Education, our mission is to cultivate "whole-person global citizenship education." Rooted in Christian faith and core values such as honesty and integrity, we aim to equip our students with professional knowledge and a commission to transform the world. Yet, this holistic education is becoming increasingly challenging to impart. Faith seems to be waning among today's youth, not only in America but also in Korea, where materialism and self-centeredness often take precedence over character and faith.

GDP trajectory/ Industrial Revolutions/ VUCA

Amidst these challenges, we must consider the VUCA world we inhabit. The world's GDP trajectory over the past twenty centuries reveals that the most significant growth occurred in the last century, shaped by four industrial revolutions. The current Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by ICT innovations such as AI, big data, and hyper-connectivity, is reshaping our reality. It is characterized by hyper-speed, hyper-connectivity, and hyper-intelligence, leading to a torrential growth of knowledge and, paradoxically a surging entropy. Yes, the world we live in is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA).

Knowledge

In the face of these challenges, we must acknowledge that knowledge is

the catalyst for growth in our contemporary world. Frank Rhodes said: “A nation’s present well-being and future destiny are no longer constrained only by its “givens” (its geography, its population, its natural resources). Knowledge has become the prime mover. ... Unlike other assets, whose utilization and investment are constrained by the law of diminishing returns, knowledge is autocatalytic, enlarging in the hands of its users; expanding in the range of its usefulness, even as it is applied; growing in scope, even as it is shared, increasing in refinement, even as it is questioned, challenged, and contested.” However, knowledge’s rapid expansion is paralleled by increasing entropy, making it imperative for our students to be well-prepared for the VUCA world. This is where institutions like CGE universities and Handong Global University should step in.

New Paradigms

As President of Handong Global University, I have set forth three core values: unwavering Christian identity, a global perspective, and student-centric focus. Our current curriculum and pedagogy, while noble in intention, are insufficient to prepare our students for the VUCA world. We are committed to eliminating the boundaries that fragment academic disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to research and learning.

Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity, a term often heard but not fully grasped, is a cornerstone of our approach. It represents a holistic, boundary-crossing form of learning and problem-solving that extends beyond traditional academic silos. It encourages students to draw from various fields of study, merging knowledge and insights to tackle complex, real-world challenges. Transdisciplinarity is not just a buzzword; it's a fundamental shift in our approach to education.

Consider an example of a student majoring in environmental science. In a traditional educational setting, she might focus solely on her field,

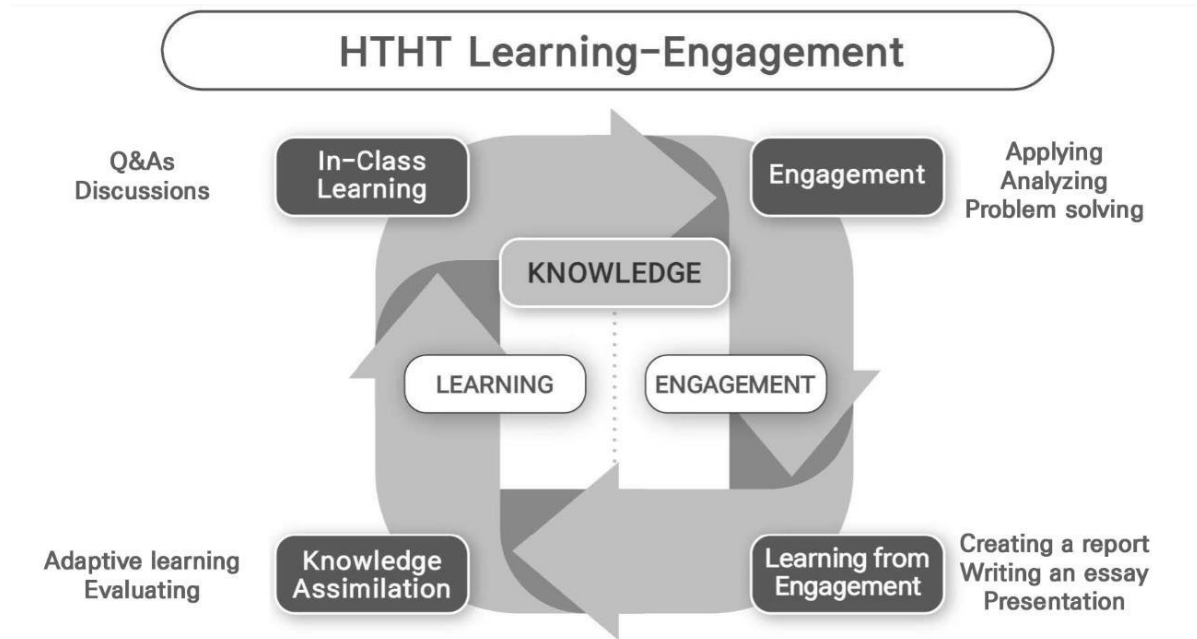
acquiring in–depth knowledge of ecological systems. However, in our transdisciplinary approach, she takes courses from several diverse disciplines and collaborates with students from various backgrounds such as economics, policy studies, and engineering. Together, they address a pressing issue: the impact of deforestation on local communities and global climate changes. This approach allows her to not only apply her environmental science knowledge but also understand the economic and policy factors at play, and leverage engineering solutions to mitigate deforestation.

This holistic approach transforms students into adaptive thinkers, able to navigate the complexities of the VUCA world by drawing upon various disciplines to find innovative solutions. It is not about diluting expertise but enhancing it through collaboration and interdisciplinary insights.

To address the challenges, we are working to enhance our curriculum, enabling students to pursue double majors and create their interdisciplinary majors, customizing their education to their unique interests and the needs of our fast–changing world. (I.e., getting rid of all internal boundaries.)

Autocatalytic Process of Learning

Now, let me move to the topic of the learning– engagement model I would like to highlight. The traditional teaching–learning paradigm in colleges and universities is undergoing a profound shift. Advances in technology have opened new avenues for learning, and generative AI can rival, if not surpass, human professors in certain areas. Students can access world–class lectures and materials online, and many institutions are adopting flipped learning models. Students watch and learn the course material online before they come to class. In a classroom, professors do not teach from the class material but lead a discussion by asking and answering questions with students. Professors are evolving into coaches and facilitators, guiding students through the learning– engagement process.



This paradigm shift places a renewed focus on the purpose of learning. The purpose of learning is the acquisition of knowledge to be shared through engagement with others. Learning becomes an autocatalytic process, self-reinforcing through engagement, discussion, and application. It is not enough to acquire knowledge; students must apply that knowledge to real-world challenges, both local and global, to refine and expand it. This transformational process empowers students to accumulate knowledge while shaping their character.

The autocatalytic process of learning and engagement is where we find the beating heart of education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It emphasizes the importance of not just acquiring knowledge but also actively applying it in problem-solving scenarios. It thrives on engagement activities, where students interact with peers, professors, and the broader community to share their knowledge, test their ideas, and refine their understanding. This autocatalytic cycle creates knowledge.

Teach Learning and Help Engaging

In this evolving landscape, universities must teach students not only what to see but also how to think. Creative, critical, and analytical thinking are crucial skills in a world where knowledge is abundant but the ability to

solve complex problems remains invaluable.

Moreover, universities should equip students with the ability to communicate effectively. While machines can generate content, human creativity and nuance are irreplaceable. Writing, presenting, debating, and discussing are essential skills that universities should foster.

HTHT

Engagement activities, both local and international, are the catalysts for this transformative learning process. Yet, it is disheartening to see that many institutions underestimate their importance. Local engagement connects students with their immediate community, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy. It provides opportunities for the practical application of knowledge, be it through internships, community service, or research collaborations.

Global Education

International engagement, on the other hand, broadens horizons and nurtures global citizenship. In a world where borders are increasingly porous, global perspectives are not a luxury but a necessity. Engaging with international communities, whether through study abroad programs, international internships, or virtual collaborations, exposes students to diverse cultures, ideas, and challenges.

We at Handong Global University are planning to institute a program that sends out students for a semester to a local community or to an international extension site. They will go out in teams with a coaching professor and spend a semester abroad or away from the university campus. Each team, comprised of about 10 students with diverse backgrounds (majors), will be given a mission of conducting a project – a community development project, a business development project, a startup project, among many others. They will be joined by the local students and/or residents. This engagement exercise will give the students experiences of learning from each other, learning from the project, and learning from engagement.

It is through engagement activities, both local and international, that we translate knowledge into action, embodying the values and principles we hold dear. As we engage with others, whether in our immediate communities or on the global stage, we have the opportunity to impact lives, effect change, and refine our character. (In sum, we are also getting rid of all the boundaries that separate the university campus from downside.)

THE QUOTE

A comment on the global reach of education is in order. Peace and prosperity in the 21st Century depend on increasing the capacity of people to think and work on a global and intercultural basis. As technology opens borders, higher education and intellectual and/or professional exchanges open minds. International student exchanges provide opportunities to gain understanding of different cultures of the world. Advanced information technology may allow universities and colleges to reach students who live overseas, thus cannot come to class for face-to-face education. Higher educational institutions in advanced countries can assist universities and colleges in developing countries with capacity-building programs. Handong Global University has been actively assisting higher educational institutions to build educational capacity by working together with universities and colleges in developing countries through the university twinning program (UNITWIN) of UNESCO.

Global Citizenship Education

In sum, the autocatalytic process of learning and engagement, steeped in the values of global citizenship and RC living, is at the heart of Christian higher education's response to the challenges of the VUCA world. We must embrace transdisciplinarity, harness technology, emphasize engagement, and prepare students not only with knowledge but also with the skills, character, and ethical compass to navigate this complex and uncertain world.

Why American's Faith?

Before I finish my talk, I would like to touch upon the spirituality aspect of Christian higher education, especially in conjunction with character formation. It has been asserted by many that “America is losing religious faith,” an increasing number of Americans are leaving churches. A Korean survey also shows a similar pattern. Moreover, especially in Korea, there seems to be hatred against and hostility toward evangelical Christians and churches, thus making it harder now for young people to maintain faith in a secular society. Some students are even concealing their Christian identity.

Bonhoeffer

Christian college students are becoming a spiritual minority. However, as Bonhoeffer said, it may be the case that it is the commission, the work of Christians and, especially, of Christian college students to be in the midst of cultural and/or religious foes. As the Lord Jesus was persecuted, we should be happy to face the persecution. At Handong Global University, we emphasize global citizenship education and community living and learning in residential colleges (RCs). Through them, the students form good and healthy character such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, compassion, and leadership.

I also encourage my students to do scripture reading, worship, and praying regularly. Through the Public Reading of Scripture (PRS) program, virtually all the students participate in the movement to read the entire Bible in one year. The program has an excellent impact on the student community, making them more loving, more caring, more tolerant, and more cooperative, among other positive qualities.

Faithful Presence / Faithful Presence of Creative Minorities

In conclusion, Christian higher education is in peril, at least in Korea. Fast-paced technological innovations in this VUCA era are bringing about difficulties in educating students in Christian colleges and universities. In this speech, I propose that we should transform the educational paradigm from the teaching-learning model in an isolated ivory tower to the learning-engaging

model in a boundaryless, global campus. Moreover, we should attempt to encourage our students to prepare themselves for character formation through community living in residential college housing. Also, we provide them with opportunities to engage with fellow students around the world through global engagement programs.

Christian colleges and universities want our students to make a positive influence on our society, communities, and businesses. They will be commissioned into the society with a mission to change the world. The mission is not an easy one. Historically, the world change was not made by politicians, military powers, political powers, or the majorities of any societies. Rather, the changes were made by minorities, creative minorities, or what I call spiritual minorities. These minorities changed the world with their faithful presence. As Hunter (2010) puts it, the world isn't changed by politicians or political power, but is changed by the faithful presence of silent but creative minorities. We are given the mission of educating globally capable, creative minorities who can perform the role of faithful presence.

Why Not Change the World?

Thank you, and may God bless our efforts in Christian Higher Education.